UNITED NATIONS

DP

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/FPA/1996/6
28 November 1995

ORIGINAL: English

First regular session 1996
15-19 January 1996, New York
Item 9 of the provisional agenda
UNFPA

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

FOLLOW-UP TO AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Note by the Executive Director

1. This note has been prepared in response to a request of the Executive Board to provide the Board with preliminary information on how UNFPA plans to report on the issues and concerns raised in Economic and Social Council resolutions 1995/50 (Operational activities of the United Nations system for the international development cooperation segment), 1995/51 (Overall guidance on operational activities for development to the funds and programmes) and 1995/56 (Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations). It therefore focuses on two areas: operational activities for development; and emergency humanitarian assistance.

A. Operational activities for development

2. This section addresses issues and concerns raised primarily in the context of Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/51, including: (a) resource priorities; (b) coherence of country programmes and linkage with Country Strategy Notes (CSNs); (c) monitoring and evaluation; (d) coordination among the organizations of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP); and (e)

/...

cost-effectiveness of administrative services. A main concern of resolution 1995/51 is to further refine and effectively apply procedures for enhancing the overall impact and performance of the United Nations funds and programmes.

Resource priorities

3. Paragraph 2 of resolution 1995/51 requests the United Nations funds and programmes to give priority in their budget allocations to the least developed countries (LDCs), low-income countries and Africa. Paragraphs 3 and 4 request the funds and programmes to take into account the specific needs and requirements of the countries with economies in transition and of different regions.

4. UNFPA has indicated how it will address these important issues in document DP/FPA/1996/1, in which the Fund proposes a new approach, with two options, for allocating UNFPA resources to country programmes. The new approach, under both options, gives priority to LDCs, low-income countries and Africa. It also earmarks a specific proportion of UNFPA country-programme resources to be allocated on a temporary basis to assist countries with economies in transition. The report is to be taken up by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 1996.

5. UNFPA has consistently addressed the specific needs and requirements of different regions through its programmes in individual countries in the regions, through its intercountry programme (composed of an interregional programme and a regional programme for each of four geographical regions) and through subregional programmes for the South Pacific and for the Caribbean. The regional programmes of the UNFPA intercountry programme for 1996-1999, which was approved by the Executive Board at its third regular session of 1995 in decision 95/37, will enable UNFPA to tailor its activities to the specific needs of the countries of each region. The intercountry programme is structured according to the core programme areas approved by the Executive Board in decision 95/15.

Coherence of country programmes and linkage with CSNs

6. Paragraph 6 of 1995/51 requests the funds and programmes to improve coherence in their country programmes by, inter alia, considering the possibility of joint or consecutive meetings of the Executive Boards, where practicable, on country programmes.

7. UNFPA continues to work closely with UNDP and UNICEF at both the country and headquarters levels to coordinate programming processes. As a result, as noted in the Secretary-General's report on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for

development of the United Nations system (document A/50/202), 80 per cent of the countries have either already harmonized their programme cycles or expect to do so in preparing their next programme (para. 69). UNFPA Geographical Divisions and UNDP Regional Bureaux consult with one another regularly concerning the preparation of country programmes and country cooperation frameworks with a view to presenting them jointly to the same session of the Executive Board. Both organizations have also consulted with their UNICEF counterparts concerning the presentation of country programmes/country cooperation frameworks at Board meetings. The effects of these efforts at harmonization will be increasingly seen in 1997 when UNFPA and UNDP will be jointly presenting a number of country programmes to the Executive Board.

8. Paragraph 6 also emphasizes the importance of improving the link between country programmes and Country Strategy Notes, where in place, bearing in mind the need for cooperation between external donors and the United Nations funds and programmes in this endeavour.

9. UNFPA's Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) exercise is the Fund's principal mechanism for linking UNFPA country programmes with Country Strategy Notes as well as for making use of the programme approach to population and development. The PRSD is a country-driven situational analysis and strategy development exercise that involves pertinent government ministries in the process. It also draws upon the inputs and experiences of the agencies and organizations -- multilateral, bilateral, non-governmental and private -- active in the population and development field in the concerned country. The aim of the exercise is to develop a strategy for UNFPA assistance that fits most closely with national plans and priorities, especially as outlined in the country strategy note, and that complements the efforts of other organizations active in the population field. UNFPA will continue to build on its experience with the PRSD exercise and to align it closely with similar processes of UNDP and UNICEF.

10. UNFPA has been serving as the Chair of a JCGP subgroup that has been working on harmonizing and simplifying programme processes. The subgroup has focused on specific areas designed to serve as building blocks to increased harmonization. These include, among others, developing steps for undertaking common elements in situation analyses; preparing an update on progress with Country Strategy Notes and related collaborative efforts; and developing common procedures in the areas of programme review and programme monitoring. An analysis on the joint efforts of the funds and programmes in this and related areas, especially at the country level, will be reported on in the context of a joint report being prepared by JCGP (see below).

Monitoring and evaluation

11. Paragraph 7 of resolution 1995/51 deals primarily with monitoring and evaluation. Paragraph 7(a) asks what measures have been taken to ensure that higher priority is given to monitoring and evaluation activities and to the implementation of the findings, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/199.

12. UNFPA will address these issues in the context of its periodic report on evaluation activities, which will be presented to the Executive Board at its annual session in May 1996. The Fund will provide an analysis of these and related issues in its report to the Economic and Social Council.

13. Paragraphs 7(b), (c) and (d) ask what steps have been taken to further refine and effectively apply procedures for, respectively, strengthening national capacity for the management and coordination of international assistance; for improving national participation in the process of evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of assistance provided by the United Nations funds and programmes; and for promoting greater collaboration among United Nations funds and programmes in the evaluation of their activities.

14. UNFPA will employ a two-pronged approach to address these issues, focusing on the actions taken at the headquarters and country levels in these areas. The Fund will ask its country offices to provide information on and experiences in each of these areas and will analyse the responses.

Coordination among JCGP organizations

15. Paragraph 10 requests the funds and programmes, in the context of the JCGP, to report jointly to the Economic and Social Council through the Secretary-General on questions relating to coordination, cooperation and the division of labour, and on other issues they consider appropriate.

16. This request has been added to the agenda of the JCGP general meeting scheduled for December 1995. UNFPA will participate in, and provide inputs to, the preparation of such a joint JCGP report.

Cost-effectiveness of administrative services

17. Paragraph 11 requests the funds and programmes to explore the scope for improving the cost-effectiveness of administrative services, including the possible use of common administrative services at the field level, with the aim of strengthening programme delivery, and to report thereon to the Council at its substantive session of 1996.

18. UNFPA has continuously explored ways to improve the cost-effectiveness of administrative services, including the use of common administrative services at the field level, most notably through its close working relationship with UNDP. For example, as noted in the UNFPA biennial budget proposal (document DP/1995/42), UNFPA will further develop e-mail connections and data-transfer links between headquarters and the field as well as between UNFPA and other United Nations agencies. The Fund also plans to make its database system, including the Programme Resources Management System (PRMS) and the UNFPA Integrated Field Office System (UNIFOS), more user-friendly, allowing users to access data more efficiently and to carry out in-depth analyses of data. In the area of financial and quality control at the field level, UNFPA will also continue to make use of the UNDP Regional Service Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and to begin to make use of the services of a similar regional centre for Africa, established in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Timely reporting to the Economic and Social Council

19. Paragraph 5 of resolution 1995/50 reiterates that the funds and programmes should submit their reports to the Council in all official languages of the United Nations in good time, to enable the Council to carry out its policy guidance functions, and should schedule their Executive Board meetings so as to ensure this.

20. At the request of the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA, the Board approved the re-scheduling of the annual session for 1996 earlier than originally planned, from early June to 6-17 May 1996 (if held in Geneva) or 13-24 May 1995 (if held in New York).

B. Emergency humanitarian assistance

21. In order to provide the Economic and Social Council with the information requested in resolution 1995/56, UNFPA is examining its role and operational responsibilities in situations requiring emergency humanitarian assistance as well its operative and financial capacities in responding to such situations. In accordance with UNFPA policy, the Fund channels its emergency assistance through agencies and organizations that deliver emergency relief

programmes, including United Nations organizations, government agencies and NGOs. UNFPA considers extending such assistance, provided that the request is within the Fund's mandate and that the resources used are drawn from the funds available in the UNFPA country programme for the country concerned. UNFPA provides reproductive health counselling and services (including family planning and sexual health) through the health care mechanism that is available during relief operations. Such assistance is provided in the form of equipment and supplies as well as technical assistance, training and salary support for health personnel.

22. In 1994, UNFPA established an Office for Emergency Operations, based in Geneva, to help the Fund plan, coordinate, monitor and evaluate UNFPA activities in the area of reproductive health in emergency situations. The Office, which is in regular contact with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), jointly organized an inter-agency symposium with UNHCR in June 1995 on reproductive health in emergency refugee situations. The symposium was attended by United Nations and specialized non-governmental organizations active in the area of reproductive health. In conjunction with the symposium, UNFPA and UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate collaboration and maximize inputs of both agencies in providing reproductive health and family planning services and supporting advocacy activities to prevent violence against women.

23. During the next two years, all UNFPA Country Directors and Country Support Teams will receive the necessary tools, training and information needed to implement emergency reproductive health activities directly or through government, United Nations or specialized non-governmental organizations.

C. Reporting to the Economic and Social Council

24. As requested in resolution 1995/51, UNFPA will report on these issues to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1996, through the Executive Board. This will give the Board the opportunity, as requested in paragraph 8 of resolution 1995/51, to identify in its report to the Council specific problems, opportunities and areas in which the Council could provide cross-sectoral coordination and overall guidance on a system-wide basis.

D. Executive Board action

25. The Executive Board may wish to take note of this report, as contained in document DP/FPA/1996/6.